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SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION
FRIDAY, AUGUST 14, 2009

In Today's Papers

Interior Minister Campaigns for Support for Kurdish Initiative
Papers report today that Interior Minister Besir Atalay continues his outreach to opposition political parties and to NGOs in support of the government's Kurdish Initiative. Mainstream Sabah draws attention to Atalay's meeting yesterday with opposition DTP leader Ahmet Turk. Sabah reports that after the meeting, Atalay said, "Turkey is a big country. Let us rely on ourselves. We will solve all the problems as long as we have self confidence," and he emphasized, "this is Turkey's brotherhood and peace project." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet notes Turk said he hopes the government's plan will not be disappointing, noting that a road map was needed. Liberal Radikal reports that the Democratic Society Party (DTP) group deputy chairman Selahattin Demirtas said after the meeting with Atalay that the demands of the party were not brought up in the meeting, but these demands could be discussed in parliament at a later date. According to Radikal, the DTP wants a new democratic and civil constitution which does not include references to ethnicity or restrictions on the use of Kurdish as a mother tongue. In addition, the party would like to see measures in which local administrations are strengthened.

Cumhuriyet also points out Atalay visited the Confederation of Turkish Labor Unions (Turk-Is), the Union of Bars (TOBB), and Hak-Is. After the meetings, Turk-Is Chairman Kumlu said "Turkey's independence and borders should carry priority in all discussions." TOBB chairman Ozok said, "We want peace in our country."

In a related article, Islamist-oriented Zaman reports that, "Following the support of opinion leaders in the East and the Southeast to the 'peace and brotherhood' project initiated by the government to resolve Kurdish issue," NGOs and businessmen are saying "The problem will be solved if the government and the opposition work hand in hand," and "will relieve Turkey of a very big burden." Papers also report that the town of Eruh, which is located in the southeastern province of Siirt, will serve as the location for the announcement of jailed-PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan's 'Roadmap' for a solution to the Kurdish problem. Ocalan's lawyers and DTP members have been dispatched to the town for its annual cultural festival,

where Ocalan's plan will be announced tomorrow, August 15th. In addition, reports indicate up to 2000 police have also been dispatched to the area as a security precaution.

Diyarbakir Is Hiring Police Who Speak Kurdish
Papers report that the southeastern city of Diyarbakir is recruiting Kurdish-speakers to apply for positions as police officers. Mainstream Vatan calls the measure, "The Police's Kurdish Move." Mainstream Hurriyet and Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak call it "The Kurdish Initiative from The Police." All papers report Mustafa Saglam, who is the newly appointed chief of police in Diyarbakir, said, "I have come here voluntarily. I want to serve well by improving relations between the citizens and police. In order to achieve this, we will reinforce the cadre of the department with police who know the language of the region well." Vatan notes, "Although the contents of the government's Kurdish move are hidden as secret, according to the sources close to the government, the employment of personnel who know Kurdish in state departments is one of the topics of the move," and thus, "The Diyarbakir police will undertake a pioneering role in this sense." Yeni Safak also notes Saglam said, "Our target is zero crime in the province of Diyarbakir."

Editorial Debates on the Kurdish Initiative
Fikret Bila wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "Remarks from DTP leadership clearly indicate that this party will not commit itself to the Kurdish initiative process nor it will shape a position until a plan becomes available from the PKK as well as its imprisoned leader Ocalan. One wonders how come the stance of opposition parties is so much under fire by some opinion makers while the DTP

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cannot even go to a point beyond the PKK's clout."

Fehmi Kuru wrote in Islamist oriented Yeni Safak: "Unlike Turkey, it is a traditional practice for opposition parties to campaign for thorny issues. The government party is doing something unusual by taking a determined stance on addressing the Kurdish issue and it is taking all of the political and other risks. Is it not the time for opposition parties in Turkey to change themselves?"

Ismet Berkan wrote in liberal-intellectual Radikal: "Apart from the Kurdish issue, the government should consider to reintroduce the long-standing administrative system reform package. Turkey's system needs to be decentralized, and after all, it will also contribute to the Kurdish initiative process."

Mehmet Yilmaz wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "One of the Turkey experts in the U.S., Henri Barkey made some interesting comments, particularly on the role of Constitutional Court in Turkish rule of law system. He thinks that there will be some efforts for proceeding by the government but the Constitutional Court may be an obstacle. It is very hard to understand why and how the Court can be an obstacle to the reform process as long as it is compatible with the Constitution of this country. Just watch and see that Barkey's remarks will be start of a deliberate 'anti court' campaign within Turkey's pro-government media. The ultimate goal is to eliminate everything in the checks and balances system so that there will be no power against PM Erdogan. The end of this road undoubtedly leads to saying goodbye to democracy."

Erdal Safak wrote in mainstream Sabah: "Henri Barkey made a rightful observation in his article in Wall Street Journal. He was giving a good example by noting Turkey's worry on human rights violation in Israel and China while Kurdish is still banned in Turkey. Turkey cannot be an powerful international actor unless it addresses its Kurdish problem."

Signs the Economic Crisis Is Coming To An End
In "The Worst Is Behind Us," mainstream Hurriyet reports Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen Association (TUSIAD) chairperson Arzuhan Dogan Yalcindag spoke at yesterday's meeting of the Economic Coordination Council that convened in central Anatolian province of Konya. During her speech, she said "Considering the latest news, the world and the Turkish economy have seen the worst," of the current economic crisis. Meanwhile, Islamist-oriented Zaman reports

Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan also said at the meeting, "Whatever has been or will be done, unfortunately, 2009 will be recorded as a lost year for the world's economy history." However, Babacan also noted, "Turkey will be one of the countries that will overcome the crisis rapidly."

A Torture Crisis "In The Capital of The EU" (Vatan)
Papers report this morning that Turkey has sent a diplomatic note of protest to Belgium regarding the death of a Turkish citizen in a Belgian prison. Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports 31-year-old Mikail Tekin was arrested and jailed for arguing with traffic police last weekend, and he later died in Jamioulx prison near Charleroi. Initially prison officials said he died while eating, however, Belgian authorities said he died due to "physical violence" and opened an investigation into the death of Tekin after statements by several eyewitnesses. Three guards were interrogated but later released, which Yeni Safak says "led to controversies and reaction in Belgium and in Turkey." Mainstream Sabah reports Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu spoke to his Belgian counterpart Yves Leterme over the phone regarding the death of Tekin and asked the incident to be investigated. In "Scandal in the Capital of The EU," mainstream Vatan reports, "Belgium released three prison guards who killed 31 year-old Mikail Tekin while he was in prison," and "The autopsy report of Tekin clarified that Tekin died because he was beaten to death, contrary to prior allegations that he died when he choked while eating." In addition, Vatan notes, "The prosecutor's office released the guards saying they would investigate whether the

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guards used excessive force or not." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports, "The guards did not get any accusation or disciplinary penalty."

Holbrooke Announces Visit to Turkey
Anatolian News Agency reported yesterday U.S. Special Envoy for South Asia Richard Holbrooke announced he will visit Turkey later this month. During a speech at the Center for American Progress in Washington earlier this week, Holbrooke announced he will depart Washington on Friday for an official visit to Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Turkey. Holbrooke emphasized Turkey's importance to the efforts in Afghanistan during his speech, and noted that he is going to Turkey because the country is hosting a meeting of the Friends of a Democratic Pakistan in Istanbul. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet carried the Anatolian News Agency report in their paper today under the headline, "Holbrooke Underlined Turkey's Importance."

TV News (CNN Turk)

Domestic

Q German Ambassador Eckard Cuntz says Turkey will be strengthened if it manages to solve its problems.

Q In a visit to Rize, Prime Minister Erdogan issues messages about the democratic opening of the government, saying that the goal was to make 71 million Turkish people love each other.

Q The government will spend more than three billion lira to complete the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) which covers the mainly Kurdish regions of the country.

Q Turkey's leading business gathering TUSIAD and the Turkish Union of Chambers (TOBB) warn the government to take steps against the budget deficit

Q Nationalist party MHP launches an advertisement campaign against the government's Kurdish opening.

Q Prime Minister Erdogan says his government wants no tensions while pressing ahead with the democratic opening.

Q DTP activists rally in Istanbul demanding an end to security operations in the Southeast, and DTP deputy Pervin Buldan says Imrali prison island (where PKK leader Abdullah Vcalan is jailed) was "the address for solution."

Q DTP deputy Selahattin Demirtas says the AKP cannot ignore PKK and Ocalan while working on settlement in the Kurdish issue.

Q Former Turkish president Kenan Evran, who spearheaded the 1980 military coup, is in good health after undergoing an intestinal operation at an army hospital in Ankara.

World

Q Two suicide bombers killed at least 20 people and wounded 30 others in northern Iraq's Mosul province.

Q Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Matthew Bryza says Azerbaijan and Armenia are close to ending their long-simmering dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Q An Israeli soldier is abducted by a Palestinian organization near the Ben Gurion International Airport.

Q Human Rights Watch calls on Israel to investigate seven incidents in which it said Israeli troops shot dead Palestinian civilians who were flying white flags during the war in the Gaza Strip in January.

Q Bulgaria's Constitutional Court will examine the legitimacy of voting for Bulgarian Parliamentary elections at Turkish polling stations.

Q Syrian President Bashar al-Assad is to pay a state visit to Iran in the near future, the official IRNA news agency reports.

SILLIMAN